

SAVING THE FLETT VIOLET

War words I obeyed as dead to me as those
that incited Romans to invade,
I learn that the Flett Violet would soon have been doomed
by a mountain sheep's appetite,
but our sister mammal's been tranquilized
and lies, legs splayed, as if for human birth,
suspended beneath a helicopter, to be moved and hunted by some
who need dollars less than they need the thrill of killing.

I watch a scarce creature's being sacrificed to save one scarcer,
my concern not to miss footholds in stone as I descend
into an old volcano, in a niche of which I see
a solitary creature--its petals the phantom wings
of a Prairie Chicken Depression hunger of too many like me
ravenned into extinction--destined to survive
for a time, for a time, the hunger of another species.

A war survived, I feel, still, steel meteors slashing black fur sky,
explosions transformed, in time, to a mouthful of stars
and a father's Milky Way bed-time-story-telling tongue.

Ralph Salisbury